



Delaware Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

Customer Focus

William and Ellen Vanderwende of Bridgeville, Delaware have permanently protected five of their seven farms totaling more than 1,300 acres by selling easements to the State of Delaware's Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation. 310 of those acres were protected using funds from USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

Bill and Ellen have four children who are also interested in agriculture, and the entire family has a total of 11 farms enrolled in the program, totaling 1,800 acres. The Vanderwende family has been farming in Delaware for more than 100 years. The protection of these farms through the purchase of easements, some with NRCS FRPP funds, assures that the Vanderwende children and grandchildren have an opportunity to live and work on the farm.

Much of the Vanderwende's property is adjacent to one of Delaware's busiest beach routes. Their land surrounds many of the road-side produce stands that are a favorite stopping place for tourists en route to the beach.

The protection of these lands helps preserve a part of Delaware agriculture cherished by many outside the state. Bill and Ellen operate a farm with a 700-head dairy, 75,000 broilers, and 3,000 crop acres. Bill is the long-time chairman of the Sussex Conservation District and serves as the chairman of Delaware's Nutrient Management Commission.

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Overview:

The USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) helps farmers and ranchers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program partners with States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations to purchase conservation easements for the purpose of protecting topsoil by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land. NRCS provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership.

Conservation plans are developed on all highly erodible cropland. Nationally, over \$101.3 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. The 2002 Farm Bill produced some changes in the program, including the addition of a provision providing for the protection of historical and archaeological resources on farm and ranchlands, and the inclusion of nongovernmental organizations as eligible entities. The Farm Bill also significantly increased the amount of financial assistance available under FRPP, authorizing nearly \$600 million through Fiscal Year 2007. Sixty-seven million dollars was allocated to states to purchase easements in FY 2003.

Accomplishments:

Since 1996, FRPP dollars have been used to match funding from the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program. Landowners join the program by creating an Agricultural Preservation District. An Agricultural Preservation District contains at least 200 contiguous acres that are devoted to agricultural and related uses. Landowners who place their lands into Agricultural Preservation Districts agree to not develop their lands for at least 10 years, devoting the land only to agriculture and related uses. In return, the owners receive tax benefits, right-to-farm protection, and an opportunity to sell a preservation easement to the state that keeps the land free from development permanently.

FRPP proposals are selected through a competitive process designed to protect parcels that will help accomplish program and local land use goals. FRPP easements protect entire working farms, woodlands, wet lands, important natural areas, and historic and cultural resources. Through FY 2002, \$4,878,700 in FRPP funds have been awarded to protect over 10,600 acres of valuable farmland in Delaware. For FY 2003, cooperating entities in Delaware requested \$2,760,000 in FRPP funds. This request represents 4.2 percent of the total amount of FRPP funds available nationwide in FY 2003. Delaware received \$2,180,000 to purchase easements in FY 2003.

Outlook:*

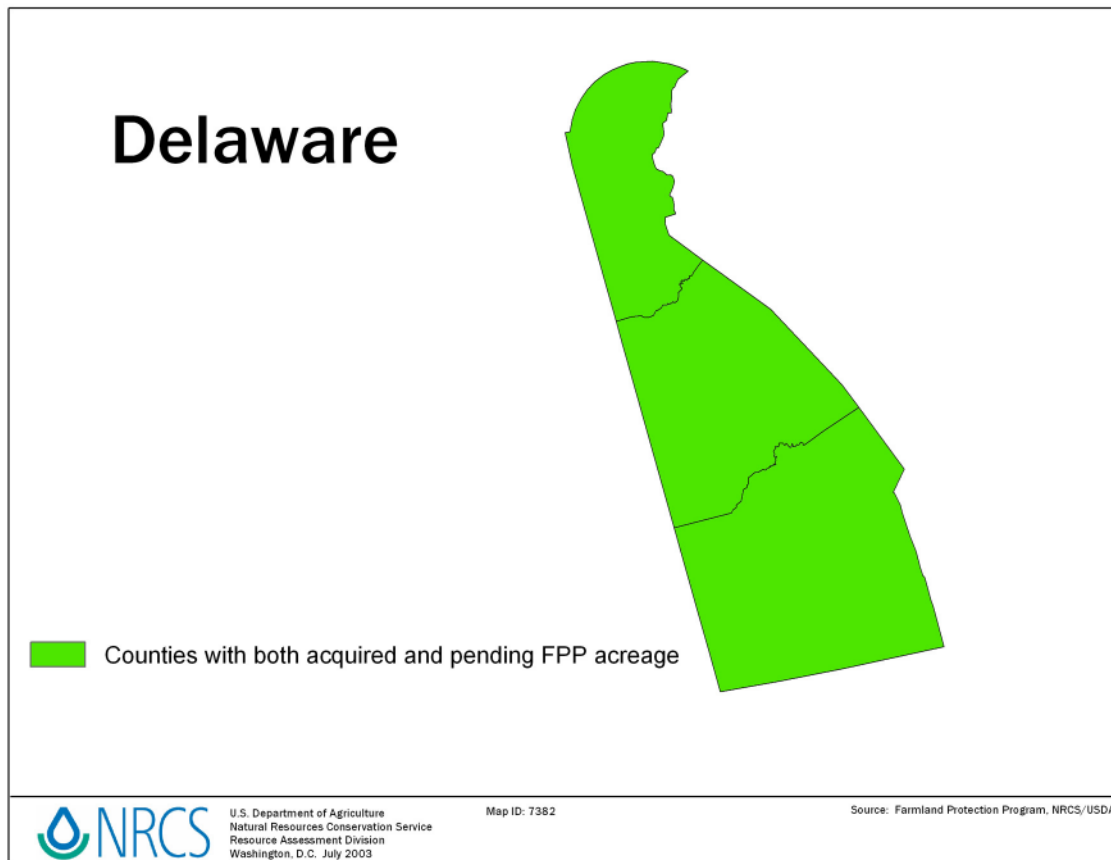
Agriculture is Delaware's largest industry, covering over 470,000 acres (37 percent) of the state's land mass. The state ranks 8th in the nation in poultry production, with Sussex County leading the country in poultry. Despite the successes of agriculture in the state, farmers are facing economic challenges from encroaching development. In 1997, American Farmland Trust's Farming on the Edge report ranked the Mid-Atlantic coastal plain—which encompasses all of Delaware—as the ninth agricultural area most threatened by development in the nation. Since 1991, the State of Delaware has been actively protecting valuable farmland. Under the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program, \$67.4 million has protected 307 properties (encompassing approximately 64,830 acres) through the purchase of preservation easements. (*Source: American Farmland Trust)

**Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Delaware Easements
as of June 2003
Number, Acres, Easement Costs by County**

Delaware					
	Easement Cost			Federal Payment	
County	Acres	Total (\$)	Avg. (\$/acre)	\$	%
Kent	4,588	3,208,241	699	1,394,743	43%
New Castle	587	1,105,077	1,883	442,032	40%
Sussex	2,912	3,421,266	1,175	1,494,083	44%
Total*	8,087	7,734,584	956	3,330,858	43%
*Totals do not include FY 2002 pending easements					

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Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Delaware Easements as of June 2003
Counties with Acquired and Pending FRPP Easements



Trends in Population by County - Delaware 1990 to 2000 (Census Data)

